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# Production of series of short 'Youtube'-style videos for web-dissemination (M51)

STATUS: FINAL VERSION

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| Partners: | RBINS, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Belgium<br>BOKU, Universität für Bodenkultur Wien, Austria<br>ICLARM, International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management, Malaysia<br>IRD, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France<br>UDE, Universität Duisburg-Essen, Germany<br>IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland<br>UOXF.AC, Oxford University, UK<br>UB, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain<br>UFZ, Helmholtz Zentrum für Umweltforschung, Germany<br>UCL, University College of London, UK<br>UCBL, Université Claude Bernard - Lyon 1, France<br>UPS, Université Paul Sabatier- Toulouse 3, France<br>ECOLOGIC, Ecologic GmbH Institut für Internationale und Europäische Umweltpolitik, Germany<br>EC-ERC, Commission of the European Communities - Directorate General Joint Research Centre, Italy<br>UD, University of Debrecin, Hungary<br>NRM, Naturhistoriska riksmuseet, Sweden<br>FIN, FishBase Information and Research Group, Inc. |


# BIOFRESH

Biodiversity of Freshwater Ecosystems: Status, Trends, Pressures, and Conservation Priorities

Project no. 226874

Large scale collaborative project

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|---|---|
| **Deliverable number** | D8.8 |
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| PU | Public | ✓ |
| PP | Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services) | |
| RE | Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services) | |
| CO | Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services) | |

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In case the report consists of the delivery of materials (guidelines, manuscripts, etc.)

| Delivery name | Delivery file name | From Partner | To Partner |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is BioFresh? | https://vimeo.com/19329382 | UOXF.AC | |
| Water Lives | https://vimeo.com/36863720 | UOXF.AC | |
| Water Lives 2014 | https://vimeo.com/90238692 | UOXF.AC | |

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## Introduction

This document provides a formal description of the three 'Youtube'-style videos produced under the BioFresh project, including an assessment of their value and impact. These videos are an integral part of the overall BioFresh project communication and dissemination strategy (D8.1). They were produced near the beginning, at the mid-point and at the end of the Biofresh project life cycle. They are hosted on the BioFresh Oxford Vimeo. The videos are available from the front page of the BioFresh Blog (www.biofreshblog.com) and integrated into the BioFresh Platform (www.freshwaterbiodiversity.eu) and publicly available for download and reuse under a Creative Commons Licence.

## *Aim and key messages*

These videos aimed to deliver three aims of the BioFresh Communication and Dissemination Strategy (D&C), namely:

1. Establish an authoritative and cutting edge profile for the BioFresh collaboration within the biodiversity and fresh-water scientific community;

2. Establish a science - policy interface between BioFresh and relevant EU and Inter-governmental organisations and treaties;

3. Promote a wider public awareness and interest in freshwater biodiversity.

The content and production was guided by three principles of the D&C strategy: i) vision-based messaging; ii) enhance access to decision making; and, iii) embrace new media.

Common to the three videos is an editorial that sought to: a) highlight the pressures to freshwater biodiversity and the scientific effort to inform relevant scientific policy; b) develop understanding and reflection on the interface between science and policy; and, c) to explore and experiment with the affordances offered by new technologies for science communication, engagement and dissemination.

**Note. Interpreting Vimeo statistics**
Vimeo provides statistics on 'loads' and 'plays'. A 'load' counts the number of times a web-page with the video embedded was opened. This provides a measure of awareness of the video content and core message (usually contained in the narrative accompanying the video). 'Plays' counts the number of time the play button is pushed and records how many people went on to watch the video.

## *Video 1: Introducing BioFresh*

| | |
|---|---|
| Platform: | Vimeo https://vimeo.com/19329382 |
| Director and producer: | Paul Jepson |
| Design and animation: | Adam Arnot |
| Duration: | 4.10 min. |
| Release date: | January 2011 |
| No of plays: | 2,033 |
| No of loads: | 35,443 (as of 2/4/2014) |
| Production costs: | €2535 |

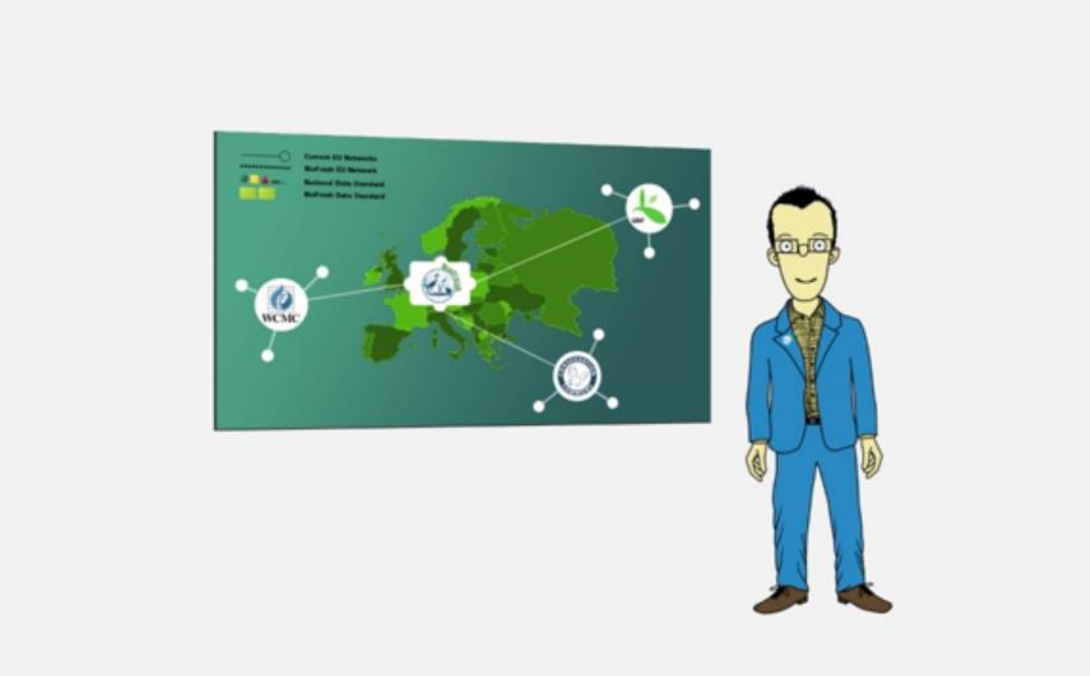

**Fig 1.** Screenshot from 'Introducing BioFresh' which was introduced and explained by an animated image of Prof Klement Tockner

**Content and concept of the video**

This video explains the state of freshwater ecosystems past and present and the need for a science data infrastructure to improve science and policy. It features an animated Professor Tockner (BioFresh PI). It contains three sequences. The first presents a brief history of river management and makes the points that a) relations between stakeholders has become more collaborative and less confrontational, and b) that while on the surface the look and quality of freshwaters has improved markedly since the 1970s there remain significant pressures that are leading to declines in freshwater biodiversity. The second sequence introduces the policy setting. It makes the point that freshwater biodiversity has a relatively low policy profile in part because knowledge is fragmented. Addressing this problem supports an evidence-based policy approach whereby policy is less subjected to the opinions of interest groups. The final sequence outlines the BioFresh vision of creating an open access data portal that links and mobilises distributed data on Freshwater Biodiversity. It positions the BioFresh vision in relation to wider developments in biodiversity informatics and policies relating to science and society.

**Goal of the video**

The communication goal was to explain and justify the biodiversity informatics vision – why linking fragmented biodiversity data bases through an open-access portal benefits science, policy and democracy. The targeted audience of the video was scientists, policy makers, river managers and university students. The technical goal of the video was to explore the potential of developments in computerised animation for science communication and gain proficiency in this communication medium.

**Statistics and Reach**

**No of plays:** 2,033 **No of loads:** 35,443 (as of 2/4/2014)

The video has been played in 84 countries, embedded on 27 web-sites (excluding BioFresh sites) and played 20-70 (av. 60) times every month since its launch. The video received the most plays in the UK (304), Germany (268) and USA (236).

**Public Relations**

Press releases about the animation were sent out to our database of 290 press contacts (at the time). This lead to the animation being featured on some of the internet's most influential conservation websites such as Monga Bay and Green Conduct. On 30.02.2011 Rob St.John published an article titled "Creative thinking aids freshwater communication" on the United Nations OurWorld 2.0 website (http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/creative-thinking-aids-freshwater-science-communication). This article used the release of the video to discuss the wider BioFresh communication strategy. The article proved successful being shared on Twitter by TED and by around the British interactive Group Science and Guardian Environment networks.

**Assessment**

The video succeeded in its aim of providing a clear and engaging introduction to concept and purpose the BioFresh. The use of animation contributed to the goal of creating a cutting-edge image of the BioFresh project. In addition, animated BioFresh logo sequence used subsequently to brand and introduce video interviews on the BioFresh blog. Animation is gaining in popularity is a format for communicating complex policy ideas. In particular, as this video nicely demonstrates, it affords the use of schematics to illustrate the networked nature of contemporary science and policy. As this video also illustrates, the ease of animating people creates an alternative to the traditional 'talking head' format as a way to create personalise science communication.

Science communication using visual media has traditionally been the domain of media professionals. This video demonstrated that good quality videos can be produced by scientists at relatively modest cost. We found that story-boarding a video is similar to the practice of creating a lecture using PowerPoint, and that production – animation, voice over, etc. – is easily sourced. This video was animated by a recent graduate of the BSc Computer Games and Animation at Oxford Brookes University. However, we learnt that there are many small companies providing animation services for €800-1000 per minute. In addition, it was a revelation that professional voice overs can be purchased on-line for under €100. In short, we learnt that animation is an available, affordable and flexible science communication medium that can be deployed affectively by scientists with little video production experience.

## *Video 2: Water Lives*

| | |
|---|---|
| Platform: | BioFresh Oxford Vimeo https://vimeo.com/19329382 |
| | Oxford YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnP32kk3GrQ |
| Producers: | Rob St John and Paul Jepson |
| Animation: | Adam Proctor – fortsunlight.co.uk |
| Haiku: | John Barlow – wingbeats.co.uk |
| Soundtrack: | Tommy Perman - found.surfacepressure.net |
| Duration: | 6.10 min. |
| Release date: | 19 March 2012 |
| Production Cost: | €4.450 |


**Fig 2.** Screenshot from "Water Lives" featuring the work of Scottish animator Adam Proctor.

**Content and concept of the Video**

The second video "Water Lives" was a more ambitious undertaking. It is an art-science collaboration that animates the annual life-cycle of freshwaters using diatoms as the subject. The video was animated by Scottish artist Adam Proctor, sound-tracked by a specially composed piece of music by Tommy Perman from Scottish, BAFTA award winning arts collective FOUND which samples a series of haiku about freshwater ecosystems written by environmental poet John Barlow. The content of both, the animation and haiku, was influenced by close consultation with BioFresh freshwater scientists Rick Battarbee from University College London and Ana Filipa Filipe from the University of Barcelona, alongside Alistair Seddon from the University of Oxford Zoology department.

The concept of the video emerged from two strands of thinking. The first concerned the role and value of contemplation in the production of strategic policy decisions in situations of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge. The second concerned the ability of the institutional structures of water governance to accommodate the dual identity of water as a medium for life and as an inert resource for humanity. It took as its focus diatoms. This was in part because the curious and otherworldly physical form of freshwater organisms such as diatoms provides abundant artistic inspiration as well as exemplifying the core message. A full account of the concept of

the video including artistic reflections is available at http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/biodiversity/governance/water-lives/index.html.

**Goal of the video**

The policy message this video aimed to convey was "Are we capable of policies that simultaneously frame freshwaters as a media for life and resource for humanity". The aim was to produce a video that would promote reflection deeper reflection on the part of scientists, policy-makers and others on the core policy message. An art-science video produced for playback on tablets and laptops during periods of down time – evening or commuting – was seen as a way to generate such reflection. In addition, our hope was that an art-science video would travel more widely beyond the freshwater science-policy community and raise awareness of the freshwater issue amongst artistic and creative communities.

**Statistics and reach**

**No of plays:** Vimeo 4.050, Oxford YouTube 1,112. **Total** 5,162. **No of loads:** Vimeo 63,293

The video has been loaded and played in 84 countries, embedded on 62 web-sites (excluding BioFresh sites) and played 39-118 (av. 63) times every month subsequent to the initial launch (i.e. since May 2012). During the two weeks after its launch it received 16,426 loads and 2,154 plays. The video received the most plays in the UK (1,320) followed by the USA (766), Germany (269), and then Canada, India, Spain and Australia (116-100 plays each).

**Public relations**

A press release about the animation was sent out to our database of press contacts. News of the animation was featured on an eclectic range of web-sites, including National Geographic, The Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts, Europe in the UK, The Scotsman Radar Music column, and Caught by the River (see endnote[i] for links). In addition, it was tweeted by influential people and organisations such as the European Commission (208K followers), Ginny Battson (1.2K followers, Getty Images photographer) and Catherine Duigan (1.1K followers, aquatic biologist).

Paul Jepson was invited to present and discuss the video at the British Interactive Group's (A UK association of science communicators) annual conference in July 2014 and the video was included in the official selection of the North Sea Film Festival 9-12 November 2012 (http://www.northseafilmfestival.com/). The policy question (point 2) above was also explored in an article for Public Services review titled "Going with the Flow" and authored by Paul Jepson and Rob St John (http://research.freshwaterbiodiversity.eu/downloads/biofresh_thought_pieces04.pdf).

The title of this video 'Water Lives' has been used more widely as a strap-line for BioFresh thinking and communication. For instance we used it as the title for the final science-policy symposium "Water Lives: new scientific horizons for biodiversity and water policy" (www.waterlives.eu). Stills from the video have been used in other dissemination products, notably a postcard that carries a policy question and in PowerPoint presentations.


**Fig 3.** Image from the 'Water Lives' animated used in a series of postcards to support the science-policy dialogue

**Assessment**

This video was enjoyable to produce and it was intellectually fascinating for BioFresh scientific partners to collaborate with artists to co-produce a science communication output. The video certainly succeeded as a novel and interesting output and one that gained a lot of critical interest. At present it is difficult to gauge what constitutes success in terms of plays and loads of science communication videos. Whilst this video was not a massive hit it is considered to have 'done well' my communication colleagues we have consulted. It certainly succeeded in spreading the freshwater biodiversity message beyond the biodiversity science and communication community. Moreover, we have found the art-science videos have a long life and can be re-used/launched to coincide with the relevant social media events (see final discussion).

Compared to the first video this one was more time consuming to produce particularly in terms of managing and brokering the expectations and ideas of the artists and scientists. It also required a level of insider engagement with artistic networks to engage the artists. A key lesson we learnt was the degree to which we could direct artists. Our approach (or view) was that we were required to accord the artists freedom in how the expressed the topic area. This resulted in a sound track that was darker and more moody than desired, and this may have put viewers off (informal conversations with young people suggested this was the case). This issue of the level of direction that can be provided when commissioning artists was discussed when the video was presented to the British Interactive Group. Representatives from arts councils provided very helpful input saying that we could (and should) have been more prescriptive in specifying the scope of the soundtrack.

## *Video and Podcast 3: Water Lives '14, Water Lives: forging a science-policy interface*

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|---|---|
| Platform: | BioFresh Oxford Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/90238692<br>Oxford YouTube<br>Soundcloud: https://soundcloud.com/biofresh-oxford/waterlives<br>Oxford ITunesU |
| Producer: | Paul Jepson |
| Presenter: | Helen Scales |
| Photography: | Ria Mashaal |
| Duration: | Video 3.40 min, Podcast 22 min . |
| Release date: | 21 March 2014 |
| Production Cost: | €4.151 |

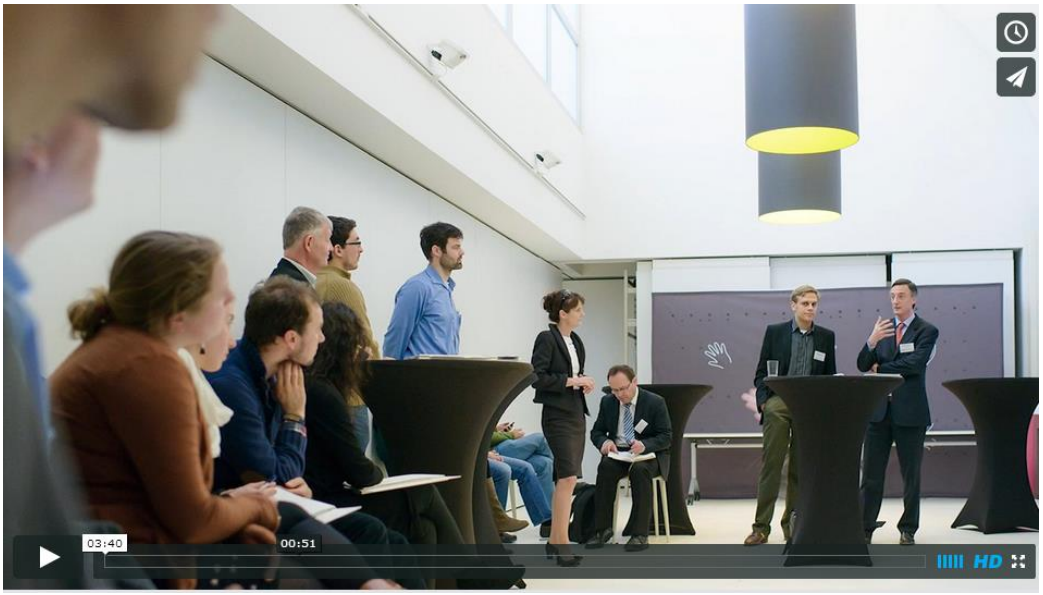


**Fig 4.** Image from the 'Water Lives '14' video that sought to communicate a visual and audio of science-policy dialoguing in action!

**Content and concept of the video and podcast**

The aim of the video and accompanying podcast "Water Lives: forging a science-policy interface" was to capture and report the key messages and spirit of the final BioFresh project science-policy symposium in Brussels "Water Lives: new scientific horizons for biodiversity and water policy", see http://www.waterlives.eu/. The video summarised the key science outputs of BioFresh and illustrated the process through which science and policy interface. The podcast gave more time to the science-policy interface and in particular presented perspectives on the challenges and solutions to creating a more effective dialogue between science and policy.

The concept of this video was to make visible a space where biodiversity science and policy interact. Many scientists and interested lay publics have little knowledge of policy-making and where and how communication between scientists and policy-makers is performed. The Water Lives science-policy symposium provided an ideal opportunity to demistify the process a little at the European level. To this end, and given the nature of the location (a symposium) we opted for the more traditional approach of audio (radio interviews) and still photography. We

commissioned freelance radio producer and presenter Helen Scales and freelance photographer Ria Mishaal. This approach enabled us to produce a longer podcast along side the three minute video.

**Goal of the video and podcast**

As well as profiling the importance of freshwater biodiversity as a domain for research and policy, our goal with this output was to support wider efforts to strengthen the science-policy interface.

The video was aimed at a general bidiodiversity science audience and communicates the messages that: a) freshwater biodiversity and ecosystems are important and under-pressure; b) that new policy-relevant scientific findings have been produced; and, c) that scientists and policy makers are talking about how to operationalise these findings. The podcast is more reflective and is aimed at scientists looking to engage more actively with policy makers, it discusses the challenges and means to bridge scientific and policy professional world views and bring the two into dialogue.

**Statistics and Reach**

At the time of writing this report, these outputs have only recently been launched so it is too soon to provide comparable statistics with the two earlier videos. The outputs are designed for embedding on web-sites of BioFresh partner institutions as well as adding additional content to the resources area of the BioFresh platform.

## *Assessment and reflections*

The original DOW proposed a 28 minute video/DVD for TV broadcasting. This was subsequently amended to the three 'Youtube'-style videos described above. It is impossible to know which approach may have had the greater impact. However the process of producing these three videos has generated valuable insight on the value of video shorts.

It probably goes without saying that media viewing habits have transformed in the last 5-10 years. Whilst traditional news media (particularly TV) remains the primary source of science news for the general public, audiences for more specialist science output increasingly gain their news, information and opinion via online channels and micro-blogging platforms (Twitter). A key advantage of producing content for social media platforms is the longevity of the videos. As the statistics for the first two videos show they are 'tortoises' - receiving steady numbers of views per month following their launch with, as yet, no significant drop off. Furthermore, these videos are communication assets that can be 'worked'. The Water Lives art-science video, in particular, became a communication resource that we re-used, via twitter and blog posts, to take advantage of the publicity opportunities offered by the many social media 'days' (e.g. world water day, international biodiversity day, blog action day etc.). Realising the communication potential of these videos does, however, require someone with dedicated and regular time devoted to promoting the videos through aligning them with wider social media trends. The structuring of the BioFresh communication resources meant that we had such a person for only part of the project and the 'working' of these video assets was intermittent as a result.

Beyond their contribution to the external communications of BioFresh, these three videos have played a valuable role in changing attitudes towards science communication among BioFresh scientists. At the beginning of the project the general attitude was that communication and dissemination was something that happened at the end of research; that was conducted by communication specialists and of little academic interest and was expensive to do. The production of these videos in combination with video interviews of BioFresh team members carried on the BioFresh blog, has helped change these attitudes. We demonstrated that:

i) Scientists can produce good quality video and audio outputs at relatively low cost using freelance and on-line expertise and resources. That it is both intellectually stimulating and enjoyable to collaborate with people from different professional backgrounds on a video science communication output.
ii) That the skills scientists have in lecturing and writing is readily transferable to providing audio interviews and/or story-boarding.

Increasingly, scientists need to embrace societal trends relating to research openness, transparency and impact. These videos have helped BioFresh scientists embrace this change. They have provided examples that have offered inspiration and ideas, points of learning as well as resources that BioFresh scientists could draw on to engage with broader developments in science and new media communication in their respective institutions.

[i] http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/03/19/water-lives-animation-freshwater-ecosystems
http://www.sustainablepractice.org/2012/04/04/water-lives-animation-on-biodiversity-in-river-and-lakes/
http://www.europe.org.uk/2012/04/24/water-lives/
http://radar.scotsman.com/viewpost.aspx?id=650
http://www.caughtbytheriver.net/2012/03/water-lives/